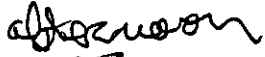


RECEIVED

SEP 27 1999

EIS000044

Nye County's Oral Statement Regarding Water Resources on the Draft Environmental Impact Statement for a High-Level Nuclear Waste Repository at Yucca Mountain, Nye County, Nevada.


Good evening, my name is Thomas S Buqo and I reside at 4 Private Road in Blue Diamond, Nevada. Since August 1996, I have been a consultant to the Nye County Nuclear Waste Project Office on water resource issues. I am the author of two documents cited in the Yucca Mountain Draft Environmental Impact Statement. Copies of this report are available on the Yucca Mountain home page and portions of these reports have been quoted, and misquoted, in the Draft EIS. I will be commenting on the portions of the Draft EIS that are related to water resources.

The results of Nye County's water resource evaluations found that the direct impacts of water withdrawals for the proposed repository will be limited to a localized lowering of water levels that was not deemed to be significant. However, the evaluation did find that the predicted leakage from the repository and the cumulative impacts of the proposed repository will indeed be significant and that mitigating measures must be implemented. The Draft Yucca Mountain EIS is inadequate with regard to its evaluation of impacts on water resources and corresponding mitigation and must be revised extensively.

The cumulative impacts on water resources will include the direct and indirect impacts of 1) the total radiological burden that will be imposed on Nye County; 2) the impacts of federal land withdrawals on water resource availability; 3) the impacts of federal policies regarding nuclear weapons testing, waste disposal, and environmental protection; and 4) the water

resource use and management practices on both private and federal lands in the County.

The Department of Energy, through their selection of a reduced region of influence, limited their analysis to only the direct impacts of their water withdrawals from a single basin while ignoring documented impacts that occur over a much broader region. Further, the Department ignored other federally prepared reports that detailed the direct, indirect, and cumulative impacts of Department of Defense, Energy, and the Interior actions over the same region. This approach is inconsistent with the CEQ guidance for considering cumulative impact assessment under NEPA and with 40 CFR 1508.25.

All the Yucca Mountain EIS says with regard to cumulative impacts is that the potential impacts to groundwater would be small and limited to the immediate vicinity of the land disturbances associated with the action and that some minor incremental risk would occur from drinking the groundwater down gradient of the repository at some distant time in the future.

This approach is inconsistent with statements in the Draft EIS:

"The general path of water that infiltrates through Yucca Mountain is south toward Lathrop Wells, into and through the area around Death Valley Junction in the lower Amargosa Valley. Natural discharge of groundwater from beneath Yucca Mountain probably occurs farther south at Franklin Lake Playa." Vol. I, p. 5-23.

"The implementation of the proposed action could potentially affect the water supply in Death Valley National Park, which is downgradient from Yucca Mountain" Vol. II, Appendix C, page C-9.

The region of influence evaluated for cumulative impacts cannot be smaller than the region over which impacts are expected to occur. Thus, the Department's approach is inconsistent with the letter and intent of NEPA, CEQ guidance, and other federal documents including the EIS for the Nevada Test Site, and the Special Nevada Report.

If the Department of Energy chooses to continue to ignore the local perspective by not evaluating the impacts identified in the Nye County document and by other federal agencies, then it is imperative that Nye County's perspective be clearly documented in the EIS as an opposing viewpoint.